

The Rockefeller Foundation and the Patronage of German Sociology, 1946–1955

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THE ENCOUNTER between German and American social science which began in the nineteenth century has been well documented. Many of the first professional American social scientists received their training and advanced degrees from German universities, at a time when the modern American research university was emerging. While in Germany, American social scientists absorbed the philosophical approach to knowledge and to the study of society, in the German tradition of *Geisteswissenschaft*. After the First World War, however, the students of the first generation sent American social science along a different path, away from philosophy and towards an ideal of social science that stressed practical knowledge useful for the management and control of society, a process the historian Peter Manicas has referred to as “the Americanization of the social sciences”.¹

“Americanised” social science began in response to the changes produced during the Gilded Age. Social scientists feared the end of American exceptionalism—that the United States would avoid the miseries of industrialisation that had afflicted Europe—and looked towards science as a promise of order in a world of chaos.

Institutional economists, most sociologists, and some political scientists more deeply strained by the rapidity of change and the insecurity of American ideals, sought a different kind of science, an empirical science of the changing liberal world that would allow them technological control. The anxiety to control the careening new world on the one hand, and the narrowed focus and comfortable opportunities of professionalism on the other, turned that scientific impulse toward scientism.²

The Encouragement of Scientific Methods

As the chief patron of social scientific research in the United States before the Second World War, the Rockefeller Foundation helped to establish the research agenda of American social science. Trustees of the foundation contended that legitimate knowledge came from social scientists who applied rigorous scientific methods, such as interviews, surveys of

¹ *A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 213–237.

² Ross, Dorothy, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 467–468.

opinion and statistics. Only with the application of scientific techniques could knowledge be produced that was reliable, objective and thus capable of informing public policy. The foundation's support of American social science depended upon scientific research methods, the cultural assumptions which sustained such methods, and a commitment to pragmatic knowledge.

In addition to supporting American centres of social science research, the foundation sought out European social scientists for training in empirical research in the American style, to liberate them "from the 'speculative inertia' of traditional social science". Research in Germany was no exception, and the Rockefeller Foundation supported those institutes that employed empirical social research. Still, officers of the foundation continued to run into "speculative inertia", with most Germans content with "equipping themselves with a lot of theories about the subject before they go out to work to study the facts".³

At the conclusion of the the Second World War, the Rockefeller Foundation resumed its financial support of the social sciences in Germany. In its role as patron, the foundation could control the allocation of the funds necessary for the reconstruction of social science, and thereby had the power to control the research programmes of the Germans in a way that had not been possible before the war. The foundation's objectives remained basically the same as before the war: to move German social science away from a speculative, philosophical orientation and towards scientific research.

The Rockefeller Foundation's policy towards German social science in the postwar period also reflected the priorities of the occupying powers in Germany, especially the provisions for the "democratisation" of German culture. Americans within and outside the military government had an influence on all facets of German life, from education and the press, to political parties and religious organisations, with this purpose in mind. In practice, however, during the occupation they usually associated "democratisation" with "Americanisation"; the officers of the Rockefeller Foundation were no exception.

Foundation policy in postwar Germany should be viewed within the context both of the continuing encounter between German and American social science and the circumstances of the American occupation. Officers of the Rockefeller Foundation redefined American social science as an intrinsically democratic instrument to be used for the reorientation and reconstruction of German culture. They believed that only through the practice of science in the American manner could German social scientists produce the knowledge about political practice, economic conditions and

³ Craver, Earlene, "Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics: The Rockefeller Foundation in Europe, 1924–1938", *Minerva*, XXIV (Summer–Autumn 1986), pp. 208–212.

social relations which the foundation officers regarded as necessary to solve social problems, to create an informed citizenry and thus form a democratic society. Nowhere was the foundation's emphasis on social science and democracy more evident than with regard to sociology.

Prewar Perceptions of German Social Science

The Rockefeller Foundation had been active in Germany since the 1930s. In 1932, Tracy B. Kittredge, its representative in Paris, had submitted a report to the office of the director of social sciences, Edmund E. Day, on the status of the social sciences in Germany. Kittredge's report changed the foundation's perceptions of German social science.

The central thesis of the report was that scientific social research lacked legitimacy within German higher education, and that the promotion of such research should be the goal of the foundation's activities in Germany. Kittredge noted:

Social science research in Germany suffers, as in most countries, from the fact that the subject matter it deals with is still regarded by those controlling the purse strings as amenable to treatment by the time honored methods of the philosopher. The social sciences are still regarded as speculative rather than scientific disciplines. The conception of them as inductive quasi-laboratory subjects is just beginning to dawn. The consequence of this situation, of course, is that most of the mature leaders are in fact social philosophers or social historians rather than social scientists. Of recent years, however, the interest in careful inductive work has increased notably. Many of the younger scholars have had some initiation and some of the older leaders are eager to direct the research efforts of their students in this direction. Inductive research might be given considerable impetus by relatively moderate aid.⁴

In many ways, Kittredge's observations and recommendations provided the blueprint for future financial support in Germany, well into the postwar period. In order to steer them away from philosophy and towards science, the foundation sought out Germans identified as conversant with American empirical methods and offered grants to support their work.

Sociology was an important field of interest for the foundation. Kittredge reported some notable works in German sociology, but said that in general the field was not "advanced", i.e., up to foundation standards of empirical research: "To understand many a German sociological article one must know well the entire history of German philosophy." Nevertheless, he observed some significant developments, for example, that Karl Mannheim's seminars at Frankfurt dealt with research into social problems, such as women in politics, the sociology of the immigrant and the influence of education on social position. Horkheimer's work at the Institut für Sozialforschung was singled out for his study of labour attitudes, which relied on questionnaires. Kittredge did not visit Leopold von Wiese at Cologne and the Institut für Sozialwissenschaften, but remarked on the existence of scholarly journals in sociology.⁵

⁴ Tracy B. Kittredge, "Social Sciences in Germany, 1932", pp. 8–9. Rockefeller Foundation Archives (henceforward RFA), RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 20, Folder 186.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19.

Kittredge concluded his report by suggesting three forms of financial support the foundation could employ for German social science. These included long-term grants to institutes, short-term grants to one-man centres, and grants to support specific research projects. Beyond these recommendations, the tenor of Kittredge's report was cautious and circumspect: "The above report is not a plea for an immediate and large program in Germany. Political and economic conditions there are changing too rapidly to warrant anything else than a policy of caution for some time to come."⁶

Surveys of Conditions in Germany, 1946–1950

Such caution continued to characterise the Rockefeller Foundation's policy towards Germany in the immediate postwar period, between 1946 and 1950. Some limited funds were granted for the resurrection of German universities. For example, the foundation was the chief patron of the exchange between the University of Chicago and the University of Frankfurt. The exchange—started in 1948 by the president of the University of Chicago, Robert M. Hutchins—was intended to resurrect German university life by sending American professors to Germany for one or two semesters, to give lectures, and more significantly, to conduct seminars. Several social scientists, such as the sociologist Everett C. Hughes, travelled to Frankfurt as members of the exchange. However, the foundation discontinued support for the exchange after 1951. Questions arose within the Social Science Division about the opportunities for research, the benefits the University of Chicago would gain, and the fact that the social sciences did not figure as prominently as the foundation had hoped. Still, some within the foundation urged continuation of the project, for the "contribution it will make to modifying university life and thought in Germany in the directions of freer and more effective discussion and criticism, to building up in Germany the social sciences ... and to democratizing German values and practice".⁷ In general, however, the foundation did not leap to help social science with the same energy as before the war. Instead, it sponsored several trips to Germany in order to survey conditions there and to aid in the formulation of policy.

The first survey was conducted in 1946 by two foundation trustees, John D. Rockefeller III and William I. Myers, whose observations were significant in shaping the foundation's policy in postwar Germany. Both con-

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷ LCD, diary excerpt, 27 April and 11 May, 1950. RFA, RG 1.2, Series 216, Box 1, Folder 1. See also, "University of Chicago–University of Frankfurt Project", 10 February, 1948, p. 1; and Raymond Fosdick, memorandum, no date, in *ibid.*; "Report of the Special Investigation Committee on the Chicago–Frankfurt Exchange Program", 12 July, 1951, and "Agreement concerning a Cooperative Program of the University of Chicago and the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universitat, Frankfurt", Presidential Papers, 1944–62, Department of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

cluded that the future of Germany was dependent upon an improved economy; all other concerns, whether political or cultural, could not be considered until the economy improved. Nevertheless, both suggested ways in which the Rockefeller Foundation could promote democracy in German cultural life, chiefly by focusing on education. Rockefeller suggested five project areas for the “dissemination and application of knowledge” and the subsequent spread of democracy in Germany: to provide books, create exchange programmes for teachers, establish cultural centres, provide training for administrators and teachers, and offer fellowships for promising teachers.⁸ Although the foundation did not act upon all five recommendations, they did represent the basic framework of its policies until 1950; for instance, exchanges were initiated and books programmes were established.

Another survey was carried out between January and February 1947 by Albert R. Mann. Mann’s survey was broad and comprehensive, dealing with general conditions in Germany—such as the economy, political life, youth problems and education—as well as more technical matters, such as higher education and research in the natural sciences, medicine and the humanities.

Mann found the social sciences in a particularly poor state. His notes pointed to two causes for the poor quality of German social science research. First, the Nazis had cut off communication with the outside world—a sort of intellectual autarky⁹—which denied German scholars access to work produced in England and the United States. Consequently, he asserted, what work remained in Germany was tied to the tradition of philosophical speculation which had always dominated German social science. Mann observed:

Such sociology as existed was largely philosophical and theoretical, as opposed to factual, realistic sociology. And as Professor Thurnwald of Berlin stated to Mr. Mann, philosophical sociology was of little value in Germany today. It was wholly separated from economy and had become a separate discipline. Professor Gerloff at Frankfurt, for example, had specialised in public finance, but with the coming of the Nazis he had changed his field to historical studies on the origins of money and ethnology—a complete diversion.¹⁰

Mann’s immediate concern was that German social science was not in a position to be deployed to solve the pressing social and economic problems facing postwar Germany. Thus, the push for objective, practical social science that had characterised foundation policy before the war carried a renewed sense of urgency in occupied Germany.

⁸ John D. Rockefeller III, “Possible RF Projects in Area of Dissemination and Application of Knowledge, 1946”. RFA, RG 3, Box 2. Rockefeller-Personal-Europe 1946.

⁹ On the Nazi’s “cultural autarky”, see Beyerchen, Alan, “Anti-Intellectualism and the Cultural Decapitation of Germany under the Nazis”, in Jackman, Jarrell C. and Borden, Carla M. (eds), *The Muses Flee Hitler: Cultural Transfer and Adaptation 1930–1945* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), p. 37.

¹⁰ Albert R. Mann, “Report on Educational Conditions in Postwar Germany, January and February 1947”, p. 95. RFA, RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 5, Folder 24.

The survey by Robert J. Havighurst between September and November 1947 contained similar observations as Mann's report, but Havighurst laid greater stress on the role of social science in the "democratisation" of Germany. Havighurst's survey also dealt with higher education, but considered broader contours of German life, including general attitudes, health care and daily economic existence. Consequently, his recommendations to the foundation were intended to deal with more than simply higher education. He made four recommendations: to restore communications with the outside world; to provide scientific equipment, supplies and printed materials; to study constantly the process of "democratisation" in Germany; and to train leaders in important areas, such as public health, communication, youth work, teacher training and the social sciences and human relations.¹¹

The fourth recommendation expressed the significance Havighurst placed on the social sciences in the construction of a democratic culture in Germany. The intellectual "ghettoisation" of Germany had contributed to the poor state of social science; as Havighurst observed "the Germans seem not to have kept up with modern research in economics nor to have developed the use of essential research tools such as statistics". This was the result of Nazi purges: "The social sciences suffered more under National Socialism in Germany than any other branch of knowledge. The best of the social scientists were discharged, their books destroyed, and their influence dissipated."¹² Thus, for democracy to be fully effective, the social sciences had to be reconstructed along modern standards, meaning American standards.

The social sciences suffered not only at the hands of the Nazis, but also from their restricted place in the German universities. Havighurst noted:

The social sciences which are thought of in American universities as a well-organized and integrated set of departments of economics, political science, sociology, social anthropology, and psychology with certain aspects of history and geography do not exist and never did exist in Germany. The Universities of Frankfurt and Munich are the only ones in the western zones with a faculty or division of social sciences; all the other universities in the three western zones divide the social sciences between the faculty of the school of law, where economics and a small amount of political science are taught, and the faculty of philosophy, where a small amount of psychology and an even smaller amount of sociology are taught.¹³

The problem of the German university, as Havighurst understood it, was not only a lack of qualified social scientists but that its institutional structure was antithetical to the American style of research. If American social science was to be successfully transplanted in Germany, the institutional setting would have to be substantially altered.

¹¹ Robert J. Havighurst, "Report on Germany, 1947", pp. 114–119. RFA, RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 3, Folder 17.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

For Havighurst, this style of social science was not only the standard by which the social sciences were to be judged, but was also—by definition—an agent of “democratisation”. He contended:

The purposes of instruction and research in the social sciences in Germany or any other modern society may be said to be: 1) to provide data and analysis of economic, political, and social processes, 2) to produce informed, active, and moral citizens. If reconstruction is to proceed along democratic lines in Germany, social sciences must be developed so as to achieve both of these purposes fairly well.¹⁴

Also implicit in Havighurst's judgement was the belief that social scientific knowledge provided a more effective conceptual framework with which to understand and appreciate democratic institutions. He observed a class of university students in English and American literature who aspired to academic positions:

In the university they are encouraged to specialize in a particular area and rather discouraged from taking courses outside their special area. Consequently, none of these young people had studied any of the social sciences except history. Yet they were all going to teach German boys and girls about English and American institutions through the medium of the language and literature of these countries. It seemed to me that they were quite unprepared for this responsibility, not that they should take anything they find in Britain or America as *ipso facto* democratic but rather that they should have sufficient general knowledge about economic, social, and political life in the modern world to be able to find their way around in English and American literature and to help their students orient themselves to this world.¹⁵

Here, again, Havighurst identified social scientific knowledge as an effective tool in understanding and practising democracy.

The survey of 1950 conducted by Joseph H. Willits, director of the social sciences, marked a critical transition in the Rockefeller Foundation's activity in Germany. Willits' report of his trip suggested that a new direction in foundation policy towards Germany was necessary, one which was more cost-effective and which coincided with its policy of “the promotion of knowledge and its effective application to human interests”. He argued that the foundation had followed policies laid down by the military authorities, and had essentially provided a supplement to military government funding. Between January 1948 and April 1949, the foundation had spent over \$600,000 on activities in Germany: 32 per cent on exchange of experts, 30 per cent on general cultural exchange, 31 per cent on youth and student activities and less than 7 per cent on research projects. By following a line close to the interests of the High Commission for Germany, Willits contended, “it is fairly clear that our German program . . . was essentially outside the Foundation's usual channels of interest. In good measure it supplemented the efforts of the official agencies and, broadly, followed their directions and methods.” Willits' policy suggestion, therefore, was no longer to mimic the military authorities: “Any Rockefeller

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Foundation program for Germany must therefore be highly selective and for purposes not covered by the program of HICOG.”¹⁶

The chief area of interest for Willits was support for higher education. He believed universities had been neglected by the military authorities, overshadowed by the financial aid and attention given to primary and secondary education. While he praised the distinguished history of the German university system, and emphasised the crucial position it held in the future shape of Germany, he nevertheless perceived problems:

German universities have not kept step with the social changes of the times and . . . they have concentrated too much on the specialist intellect to the neglect of the whole man. As a system of human relations, the German universities are archaic. Their relations with contemporary social life and the real world are often remote and highly academic in the bad case.¹⁷

Foundation policy, Willits concluded, had to focus on “education at the highest cultural and intellectual level”. To that end, he suggested a five-part programme for German higher education, which had important implications for the support of the social sciences. The five were: aid for training students for university; interuniversity collaboration of the sort begun between Chicago and Frankfurt; support of research; support for the Free University; and an examination of scientific and scholarly literature. The provision for research was of importance to the social sciences. Funds for research were to be limited to groups which had specific research proposals, subject to the foundation’s interpretation of useful research. In terms of social science, this meant “a) a scientific study of problems of the real, human world, as distinguished from the armchair logic on which German professors have so heavily concentrated [and] b) studies which would help the emerging Germany to form its new ideals out of its own better past and its present opportunity”.¹⁸ By 1950, the foundation’s policy had shifted emphasis, and was aimed chiefly at supporting social scientific research which encouraged the democratising of German culture.

The Implications of Rockefeller Patronage of German Sociology

The surveys and policy statements of Mann, Havighurst and Willits, while referring to the social sciences generally, had implications for the Rockefeller Foundation’s patronage of German sociology. However, once active financial support of German universities and research institutes began, the officers and representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation had difficulty in “translating” their notions of sociological research into German practice.

Two institutes at the University of Frankfurt demonstrate the difficulties the foundation encountered in attempting to foster an American sociologi-

¹⁶ Joseph H. Willits, “A Report on Germany”, 24 May, 1950, pp. 11, 13. RFA, RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 7, Folder 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

cal tradition in Germany. The Soziographisches Institut, under the direction of Ludwig Neundorfer, emphasised empirical research which provided information to local government in order to throw light on pressing social problems. Such research projects encouraged the study of urban reconstruction and research on the refugee problem, which included information to help in resettlement and public assistance. The foundation's European representative, Frederic Lane, praised the attempt to provide useful information, noting that Neundorfer's "interest is mainly the kind of knowledge about the immediate situation which will open possibilities for better government action, and observation of government action in order to suggest how to do better".¹⁹ The style of information produced also had the latent intention of promoting democracy. Another representative of the foundation, Philip E. Moseley, noted of a study of the refugee problem in Schluuchtern: "The project has the by-product of developing a community's awareness of its own nature and potential, of promoting a new type (for Germany) of cooperation, and a stimulating self-help rather than reliance upon centralised bureaucratic decisions."²⁰ Thus, the work at the Soziographisches Institut seemed to meet the foundation's standards of social research.

This is not to suggest, however, that the Rockefeller Foundation did not detect problems of method and legitimacy. Moseley observed that Neundorfer, while industrious at fact-gathering, lacked adequate knowledge of scientific techniques such as sampling. Lane as well expressed some reservations, concluding that Neundorfer's work:

is fully empirical, that it is not directed according to rigorous methods based on general principles but *ad hoc* methods suggested by particular problems and by a concern with presenting results in a form which will be useful and impressive for administrative purposes . . . [he] is not a systematic thinker who seeks the general meaning of the data found through the surveys; he has a practical mind which seeks how the data may lead to wise immediate policies.²¹

In short, Neundorfer was too empirical, and therefore not a scientist.

Further, Neundorfer lacked the confidence of the faculty at Frankfurt. Many referred to him as "a city planner, an architect and an enumerator", thus calling into question his legitimacy as a sociologist. Lane noted that Neundorfer "is not highly esteemed by the Faculty of Economic and Social Science . . . has almost no contact with colleagues . . . and has and will have difficulty in having his students accepted as doctoral candidates in that faculty". Without such credibility within the university, the job of spreading empirical research methods would be more difficult. Still, the work of the Soziographisches Institut was financially supported by the foundation, since, as Lane concluded, "there are not . . . more than one or two institutes in

¹⁹ Frederic C. Lane, diary excerpt, 31 July, 1952. RFA, RG 1.2, Series 717S, Box R1130, Soziographisches Institut, Frankfurt.

²⁰ Philip E. Moseley, diary excerpt, 3–6 November, 1950. RFA, *ibid*.

²¹ Lane to Willits, 24 February, 1953. RFA, *ibid*.

Germany in which students are employed on social surveys under methods or leadership any better than Neundorfer's".²²

If Neundorfer was too empirical for foundation tastes, then Max Horkheimer and the Institut für Sozialforschung sat at the opposite extreme. Largely under the influence of Horkheimer, the institute sought to re-establish its position in German social science by stressing the convergence of philosophy with the techniques of social science. However, questions arose within the social sciences branch of the foundation as to whether the institute was really committed to empirical research, or whether this masked another agenda. Louis Wirth argued that Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno were "carrying on a tremendous campaign to get support from UN, UNESCO, the German government, American occupying forces, foundations, and everybody else, and that they [were] representing themselves as the last word in the latest thing in American social science".²³ Another observer argued that "Horkheimer and his group are politically biased toward the left. They are not a 'straight social science' group and are using the 'trappings of research' to get their position across".²⁴

The Marxist orientation of the institute did not seem to concern the foundation as much as the apparently insincere commitment to scientific research methods. The assistant director of the humanities division, Edward F. D'arms, spoke to members of the institute's staff "who were unanimous in stressing their interest in problems of philosophical significance rather than with some of the contract research which they are forced to do for financial reasons". Perhaps as a consequence of this lack of interest, D'arms noted that "the students seemed able and interested but not yet versed in techniques of sampling, formulation of questionnaires and so forth".²⁵ Lane approved of the institute's style of research more than that practised at the University of Frankfurt's faculty of economics and social science, but nevertheless remained cautious in his praise. He was "bothered by two impressions: (a) They don't seem to be getting results by their approach, and (b) they are putting a lot of energy into earning money by carrying through investigations done by methods they don't believe in".²⁶

Furthermore, there were questions as to which branch of the Rockefeller Foundation should manage its support of the institute's activities. When queried about a specific project, Lane responded that such projects "should go to DH [Division of Humanities] if it was presented as a means of training doctoral candidates in philosophy, but that [they] should go to DSS [Division of Social Science] if it was presented as an investigation in social

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Leland C. DeVinney, diary excerpt, 13 April, 1951. RFA, RG 1.2, Series 717S, Box R1129. Frankfurt University: Social Research.

²⁴ RFE from EL, excerpt from memorandum, 4 June, 1951. RFA, *ibid.*

²⁵ Edward F. D'arms, diary excerpt, 5 November, 1952. RFA, *ibid.*

²⁶ Lane to Willits, 21–26 February, 1953. RFA, *ibid.*

psychology which would start with personality analysis and investigation of the factors shaping personality".²⁷ Such a situation demonstrates that the work of the institute did not "fit" the foundation's idea of social science.

Horkheimer disagreed with the representatives of the foundation on the position of sociology within the faculties. Describing the situation at Frankfurt, Lane reported that Horkheimer:

believes the philosophical faculty is the best place in which to give a general orientation in social sciences because such an orientation is most needed in Germany among the school teachers, those who take degrees in the Philosophical Faculty and go out to teach history and allied subjects. He believes it the best place in which to start social scientists on an advanced training because in the Economics Faculties the students have to spend an undue amount of time on business subjects, even for the degree Diplom Volkswirt.²⁸

Horkheimer viewed the position of sociology within the university as grounded in the examination system. He spoke to D'arms;

of his thinking in relation to a diploma which would require the combination already achieved at Frankfurt but which would be the entering certificate for the civil service, government and business, in large part. This would be called a diploma in Sociology (in the German sense), but would include work in law, economics, sociology, philosophy, psychology and empirical research. The purpose of this diploma would be to open public service to those who had not majored in law, and, conversely, to insure a broader training both for civil servants and for those who might go on to teach philosophy.²⁹

Horkheimer argued that the basis of German education was a philosophical education; therefore, his focus was not simply on the acquisition of American techniques, but on the use of those techniques to enhance a philosophical education. These thoughts on the role of the social sciences lay outside the collective perceptions of the Division of Social Science, and hindered the foundation's efforts to "democratise" German social science as they saw it.

Problems in the Support for Institutes of Social Research

The problems the foundation encountered in "translating" scientific techniques was also evident with regard to its support of the Dortmund Center for Social Research, the Sozialforschungsstelle. Havighurst, especially, was an ardent supporter of the centre, which he described as "a place where the social sciences of economics, sociology, social psychology, and law are all being developed in close touch with the practical problems of the industrial Ruhr. . . . Additions of social anthropology and social statistics would make the Center a first-class place for the training of younger social scientists".³⁰ Havighurst's plan for Dortmund, first outlined

²⁷ Frederic C. Lane, diary excerpt, 19 February, 1953. RFA, *ibid*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Edward F. D'arms, diary excerpt, 6 August, 1953, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Robert J. Havighurst, diary excerpt, 6 August, 1953. RFA, RG 1.2, Series 717, Box R1123. Dortmund Center for Social Science Research.

in 1948, had a well-trained sociologist from either the United States or Britain working at the centre for a year, instructing the staff in American research techniques. Because of his experience at Frankfurt, Everett C. Hughes was to be the sociologist in question, but when he could not receive leave from Chicago, he suggested the professor of sociology at Columbia University, Conrad Arensberg.

In co-operation with Columbia's Bureau of Applied Social Research, Arensberg was to supervise a research project in industrial sociology. The goal of the project was to introduce American research techniques in surveying mining conditions in the Ruhr. Arensberg described it thus: "During my stay in Germany my role would be to participate actively in setting up a program of instruction and research, using American sociological methods of investigation and analysis, into the Sozialforschungsstelle's studies of labor productivity, especially with reference to the conditions and organization in the Ruhr industrial community."³¹ As he soon learned, Arensberg's role was to "translate" American research methods.

Most of Arensberg's correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation focused on his efforts at this translation and the difficulties he encountered. He discovered that transferring American methods did little good if these methods lacked legitimacy and purpose in a German context. He described his relation with one of the sociologists at Dortmund:

Jahnke is a sociologist, so far more highly trained in theory than in practice, but receptive and worth working with here because I can give him the theoretical background of American methods and developments and allow him happily to set them in a German social-science perspective, which is more than half the job of translation and transmittal . . . "American methods" is all too often merely a synonym for new fieldwork or statistical techniques which seem to the Germans to have no theoretical basis. Once the theoretical basis is made clear the new methods become much more understandable, acceptable, and the more readily acclimatisable.³²

At issue was the process of legitimating new ideas:

Fieldwork on this team work project has thus begun. It seems to me that in the actual carrying through of these plans for fieldwork that the greatest need for assimilating new methods and new concepts arises. Short of fieldwork, with its common problems to be solved on the spot, it is all too easy to mistake good will and fashion quest for a desire to take over new ideas. It is when old ideas, often unconscious assumptions, fail that the new ones are welcome. But even then, here, a new idea depends upon a good theoretical introduction and explanation. The habit of thought here is still thoroughly scholastic. To raise a method to scientific dignity they need to see it as more than an operating technique; they need to see its historical continuity and to give it scholastic authority. A good deal of my work, therefore, has been to present the theory behind newer methods . . . to put them forward in the planning of fieldwork; and to insinuate them at each successive stage

³¹ Arensberg to Buchanan, memorandum, 28 April, 1949. RFA, RG 1.2, Series 717, Box 1, Folder 2.

³² Arensberg to Buchanan, 12 October, 1949, *ibid.*

when they show signs of dropping out or of failing to have become part of operating procedure. Otherwise new concepts are interesting exotic definitions and concepts, to be played with as such, no more.³³

Arensberg's task was to legitimate American methods, but this could only be accomplished by fitting them within an already established context of German social research.

After a year's work in Dortmund, Arensberg cautiously reported in September 1950 that the new techniques he introduced "have taken root and that a new assurance has developed among the personnel here that empirical research is going to become native, permanent, and successful in Germany".³⁴ He later reported to Willits that:

progress here [at Dortmund] is slow but genuine . . . [the Germans] can and do take over what we say for reworking into their own plans and their own concepts . . . they are rethinking the connections between the new methods and the older philosophising typological social science and they are spreading, in contact, meeting, and visits, and much discussion of private kind, newer empirical research methods and concepts.³⁵

For Arensberg, Dortmund was a qualified success, however, for it represented only "an island of research". The achievements of such a centre had to be weighed against the situation of the social sciences elsewhere in Germany. Although other institutes and universities employed empirical techniques:

their professors of social science are caught in older faculties, like law, have no money for research, and no access to the books from the other world that report its development abroad, and seem to vacillate between resentment of the new trends and the repetition of the older philosophical schematics. Yet the universities reach the young and train them for the civil service positions and professions which will continue to run Germany, provide main local support for the *ad hoc* fact-finding that is so well cultivated there, and continue to equate Sozialwissenschaft with philosophy rather than science and discovery.³⁶

Conclusion

This last phrase provides the most significant lesson of the Rockefeller Foundation's efforts in Germany: that the Germans retained their concept of sociology as a part of German philosophy, not American science. While Americans could introduce new methods and even legitimate them in their new context, in the end the success of the Rockefeller Foundation's efforts depended on altering perceptions about the nature of sociology. Arensberg's conclusion was that:

The real problem is one of university reform. The new institutes will slowly win recognition, but all too often they must find a place for themselves against university

³³ Arensberg to Buchanan, 28 November, 1949, *ibid.*

³⁴ Arensberg to Paine, 8 September, 1950. RFA, RG 1.2, Series 717, Box 1, Folder 3.

³⁵ Arensberg to Willits, 1 November, 1950, *ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

opposition or indifference. The problem is an internal German one, that may take a long time or a generation change to solve. Occupation pressure will not do it, as the Germans are tired of such pressure and more and more resistive or evasive of it. But perhaps help to universities in amalgamating research and teaching can make the solution come the quicker.³⁷

By 1955, the Rockefeller Foundation had ceased supporting German centres of social science research, including sociology. Its efforts had shifted to the Third World and away from the attempt to influence German culture. The foundation had had varying degrees of success in attempting to foster American-style social science research in Germany. It helped in the resurrection of German sociology, and had an effect in introducing scientific methods—goals that were clearly within the scope of foundation policy. On the other hand, both its resources and policy were ill equipped to carry out the restructuring of the universities recommended by Havighurst, Willits and Arensberg. More significantly, the quest to “democratise” German culture through sociology fell short of expectations. The Rockefeller Foundation could neither “democratise” nor “Americanise” German social science.

³⁷ *Ibid.*